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COORDINATION AND INTEGRATION OF INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL PROGRAMMES

Assessment of the work of the inter-agency task forces established by the Statistical Commission in relation to their mandates

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The present report provides an account of the origins, mandates and the achievements of the inter-agency task forces established by the Statistical Commission over the period 1993-1994.

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INTRODUCTION

1. At its eighteenth session (New York, 16-19 April 1996), the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination decided that, for the twenty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission, an overall assessment should be carried out of the results of the task force initiative, in relation to the terms of reference of the task forces (E/CN.3/1997/19, para. 20 (d)). In order to prepare the present report the United Nations Statistics Division analysed all relevant documents discussed by the Statistical Commission, its Working Group and the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities. The draft report was then sent to the conveners of the task forces for their comments and additional information. All comments received from the conveners are included in the present report.

I. BACKGROUND OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCES

A. Establishment of six task forces

2. The Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination, at its fifteenth session (New York, 29 June-1 July 1992), identified six subject areas in which a need for review was considered a priority. The Working Group noted that task force mechanisms already existed for two of the areas, established new task forces for the other four, and with the agreement of the agencies concerned, appointed conveners for each of the task forces as follows:

Task Force	Convener
System of National Accounts[a]	Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA)
Industrial and Construction Statistics	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
International Trade Statistics[a]	World Trade Organization (WTO) (formerly General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade)
Finance Statistics	International Monetary Fund (IMF)
Price Statistics including the International Comparison Programme	Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat)
Environment Statistics	United Nations Statistics Division

[a] Already existing mechanism.

3. The Statistical Commission, at its twenty-seventh session (New York, 22 February-3 March 1993), based on the recommendations of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination, strongly endorsed the establishment of the above-mentioned six task forces.[1]

B. Terms of reference of the first six task forces

4. The terms of reference for the above-mentioned six task forces were identified by the Working Group as follows:[2]

(a) Determine work being done in the specified area by the organizations involved on methods, collection, compilation, processing and dissemination and technical cooperation, although it is recognized that technical cooperation may not lend itself to treatment on a subject-by-subject basis but may need to be reviewed in an integrated way;

(b) Assess problems, duplication, weaknesses imbalances and priority gaps;

(c) Study how to carry out an evaluation of the quality of the statistics in the outputs, and carry out such an evaluation as far as possible;

(d) Review the publications issued by each organization in the field of statistics, and make recommendations, taking account of the needs of the range of users;

(e) Take agreed actions to improve the system-wide work in the area, including its coordination;

(f) Report to the Working Group at its next session on actions taken and/or present proposals and unresolved issues for action by the Working Group;

(g) In line with the recommendations of the independent Review Group, the task forces were requested to investigate ways to carry out evaluations and carry them out as far as possible;

(h) In addition, in line with the recommendations of the independent Review Group, the task forces were requested to carry out the following in their particular subject areas:

(i) On the basis of the (descriptive) integrated work programme of statistics and related documentation, make an effort to identify weaknesses, gaps and imbalances on the current programme. In such a process, budgetary questions should be taken into account;

(ii) In addition to continuing efforts to reduce the time lag between the observation period and the moment of dissemination of structural and detailed statistics, for some statistical subjects consider the possibility of collecting and disseminating more recent statistical information (main indicators).

C. Establishment of two additional task forces

5. The Statistical Commission, at its special session (New York, 11-15 April 1994), based on the recommendations of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities at its twenty-seventh session (Geneva, 6-8 September 1993) and its Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination at its sixteenth session (Geneva, 13-16 September 1993), agreed to the establishment of the Task Force on Service Statistics and the Task Force on the Measurement of Poverty.

6. The terms of reference of the Task Force on the Measurement of Poverty were established as follows:

(a) Undertake a review of current practices in the measurement of poverty with a view to determining the principal approaches, concepts, sources of data and use of poverty indicators, and the degree to which data comparability exists;

(b) Identify international agencies engaged in work on poverty data, and consider how their compilation practices, analytical methodologies and dissemination may be better coordinated;

(c) Develop a plan, if feasible, to make further progress in setting international standards.

II. INITIAL REVIEW OF THE ROLE OF THE INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCES

7. The ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities, at its twenty-seventh session, reviewed the existence of the task forces (see E/CN.3/1994/4, para. 17) and:

(a) Agreed that the task forces constituted an important initiative for improving substantive coordination and statistical development, and that some positive results were already apparent, although the task forces were at varying stages of development and progress in their work;

(b) Agreed that the task forces should not be seen as permanent bodies, and that their continuation should depend on specific needs and outputs, and requested each task force to address that question in respect of its own objectives and progress towards achieving them;

(c) Agreed that the task forces should take a flexible and pragmatic approach to the involvement of national representatives in the work of the task forces, and recognized that such involvement might not be necessary for each task force. Such involvement could take the form of providing either specific expertise or else a means of information-sharing in support of the inter-agency decision-making process;

(d) Requested the task forces to establish clear priorities and timetables for their tasks, taking account of priorities set by the Subcommittee and

relevant intergovernmental bodies. The Subcommittee recognized that individual agencies involved in more than one task force would also have to set priorities for their support of the work of those task forces; organizations would need to continue to assign the necessary resources to ensure the success of the task forces;

(e) Requested the task forces to ensure appropriate regional representation or otherwise take fully into account the regional dimension of statistical work and its coordination;

(f) Requested the task forces to share fully and widely with involved organizations relevant information about their work. Improved mechanisms needed to be explored for the efficient and rapid transmission of information, including modern telecommunications. In particular, experimental use of a bulletin-board approach was suggested;

(g) Accepted the concept of burden-sharing, including cost-sharing, on a voluntary basis for activities undertaken by the task forces. The exact approach would have to be developed within the context of each task force and of the priorities, resources and administrative and budgetary requirements of each participating organization.

8. As to the establishment of new task forces, the Subcommittee agreed (see E/CN.3/1994/4, para. 26) that:

(a) The number of task forces should be kept very limited and consistent with resources that could be assigned to them; the task forces were resource-intensive and selectivity in establishing them in priority areas was crucial;

(b) Any existing coordination groups should be taken into account, and should be used to the extent that they could meet established objectives;

(c) In establishing a new task force, the following conditions should be met:

(i) The area should be a priority area;

(ii) It should involve a number of international agencies;

(iii) An established need or problem should exist;

(iv) The subject or activity coverage should be clearly defined;

(v) Terms of reference should be established in advance.

9. Finally, the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination, at its eighteenth session, concluded that the Task Force on Price Statistics including the International Comparison Programme (ICP) had fulfilled its mandate, and agreed with the recommendation of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities that that Task Force be discontinued. The Working Group also accepted the recommendation of the Task Force on the Measurement of Poverty that the it be discontinued.

III. ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCES

10. The following provides a review of the work done by each of the task forces:

(a) Inter-agency task force on industrial and construction statistics

(Convener: OECD)

Terms of reference	Achievements
1. Determine work being done in the specified area by the organizations involved on methods, collection, compilation, processing and dissemination and technical cooperation, although it is recognized that technical cooperation may not lend itself to treatment on a subject-by-subject basis but may need to be reviewed in an integrated way.	A survey on country practices and intentions with respect to the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, Revision 3 (ISIC, Rev.3) has been conducted. In the light of the findings, the following options have been suggested for promoting greater harmony in the adoption and use of economic classifications: (a) assisting countries that have no means either now or in the near future to undertake a large-scale conversion to ISIC, Rev.3; (b) establishing: (i) a group of dedicated full-time experts, presumably based in each of the regional commissions and coordinated by a full-time expert based in the United Nations Statistics Division; (ii) a data bank of common problems and their solution; (iii) creating a hotline based in the United Nations Statistics Division, designed not so much to promote common principles and conventions as to reply to queries about inclusions within and exclusions from ISIC, Rev.3; (iv) distributing to all countries concerned a sufficient number of copies of the trilateral concordance.

Terms of reference	Achievements
2. Assess problems, duplication, weaknesses, imbalances and priority gaps.	Granted that the data-collection work carried out by international organizations has not been duplicated, this does not by itself promote coherence, particularly since international organizations have hitherto chosen which edition of ISIC they wish their members to report in. The current situation is incoherent in several respects and risks becoming more so. The scope of the Task Force has been extended to statistics on goods, which have traditionally been classified under construction statistics. An expert group meeting was convened in New York in September 1995, and the International Recommendations for Construction Statistics have been revised.
3. Study how to carry out an evaluation of the quality of the statistics in the outputs, and carry out such an evaluation as far as possible.	
4. Review the publications issued by each organization in the field of statistics, and make recommendations, taking account of the needs of the range of users.	
5. Take agreed actions to improve the system-wide work in the area, including its coordination.	The Task Force has requested that OECD develop an experimental matrix of international industrial data use, in which the cells show the degree to which each variable in industrial statistics is used by different types of governmental and international bodies, for different policy issue areas. All members of the Task Force may be asked to conduct a similar study.
6. Report to the Working Group at its next session on actions taken and/or present proposals and unresolved issues for action by the Working Group.	The Task Force periodically reports to the Statistical Commission and its Working Group.

Terms of reference	Achievements
7. On the basis of the (descriptive) integrated work programme of statistics and related documentation, make an effort to identify weaknesses, gaps and imbalances on the current programme. In such a process, budgetary questions should be taken into account.	
8. In addition to continuing efforts to reduce the time lag between the observation period and the moment of dissemination of structural and detailed statistics, for some statistical subjects consider the possibility of collecting and disseminating more recent statistical information (main indicators).	

(b) Inter-agency task force on environment statistics

(Convener: United Nations Statistics Division)

Terms of reference	Achievements
1. Determine work being done in the specified area by the organizations involved on methods, collection, compilation, processing and dissemination and technical cooperation, although it is recognized that technical cooperation may not lend itself to treatment on a subject-by-subject basis but may need to be reviewed in an integrated way.	Environment statistics: methodological work has been carried out by several members including the United Nations Statistics Division, OECD, Eurostat, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and some of the regional commissions in different subject areas and regions. Data collection has been carried out by several members, including UNEP, OECD, Eurostat and some of the regional commissions. Technical cooperation has been carried out by several members.

Terms of reference	Achievements
	Environmental indicators: several members have developed frameworks and lists of indicators. The United Nations Statistics Division has developed a list, in collaboration with the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Advancement of Environment Statistics. The list was approved by the Statistical Commission for international data compilation by the Statistics Division from national statistical services.
	Environmental accounting: the Statistics Division has issued a handbook of national accounting on integrated environmental and economic accounting. Other members, including FAO, WHO, Eurostat, UNEP, the World Bank and some of the regional commissions, have carried out methodological work in particular fields of environmental accounting. In the area of technical cooperation, several members have been active, including the United Nations Statistics Division, UNEP, the United Nations Development Programme, the Economic Commission for Europe and the World Bank.
2. Assess problems, duplication, weaknesses, imbalances and priority gaps.	In the fields of environmental statistics and indicators, the major gaps are the lack of practical manuals that include clear definitions, classifications and tabulation, for use at the international, regional and national levels. There is duplication in indicator development by international organizations. There is also a gap in the availability of comparable environmental statistics and indicators at the international level.

Terms of reference	Achievements
	In the field of environmental accounting, there is still no consensus on a range of concepts and methodological questions, notably in valuation. The London group was set up to address those issues; that group, however, comprises industrialized countries and selected organizations only. There is duplication in the area of technical cooperation: for instance, in some countries, different sponsors have been advancing different approaches with different national organizations at the same time. Since that kind of work is still in an early stage of development such duplication may be unavoidable for the time being.
3. Study how to carry out an evaluation of the quality of the statistics in the outputs, and carry out such an evaluation as far as possible.	
4. Review the publications issued by each organization in the field of statistics, and make recommendations, taking account of the needs of the range of users.	
5. Take agreed actions to improve the system-wide work in the area, including its coordination.	The Task Force could not agree on a coordinated work programme to date, agreeing only on an integrated presentation of work, due to the different mandates of the respective governing bodies of Task Force members. The response rate by Task Force members to questions related to coordinated action (gaps, strategies, goals and milestones) was low. Also, most of the Task Force members felt that a second meeting was unnecessary at this stage.
6. Report to the Working Group at its next session on actions taken and/or present proposals and unresolved issues for action by the Working Group.	The Task Force periodically reports to the Statistical Commission and its Working Group.

Terms of reference	Achievements
7. On the basis of the (descriptive) integrated work programme of statistics and related documentation, make an effort to identify weaknesses, gaps and imbalances on the current programme. In such a process, budgetary questions should be taken into account.	Methodological and programmatic issues in environmental statistics and accounting are being addressed by the London group (environmental accounting) and the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Advancement of Environment Statistics (environmental statistics and indicators).
8. In addition to continuing efforts to reduce the time lag between the observation period and the moment of dissemination of structural and detailed statistics, for some statistical subjects consider the possibility of collecting and disseminating more recent statistical information (main indicators).	As agreed by the Statistical Commission, the United Nations Statistics Division will conduct a compilation of selected environmental indicators for the first time from national statistical services. No comprehensive international compilation of environmental accounts is envisaged. The Statistics Division plans an assessment of national projects.

(c) Inter-agency task force on international trade statistics

(Convener: WTO)

Terms of reference	Achievements
1. Determine work being done in the specified area by the organizations involved on methods, collection, compilation, processing and dissemination and technical cooperation, although it is recognized that technical cooperation may not lend itself to treatment on a subject-by-subject basis but may need to be reviewed in an integrated way.	A revision to international merchandise trade concepts and definitions has been undertaken; a final report is before the Commission for its approval.

Terms of reference	Achievements
	The development of estimates and adjustments to reported data to conform to international trade concepts and definitions. Trade estimates are now exchanged on a regular basis among international organizations. Regarding adjustments, the Statistical Commission has agreed with a recommendation of the Task Force to stop work, except on adjustments for free on board/cost, insurance, freight, and the systems of trade, in view of the complexity in developing adjustments by country at the detailed commodity level.
	Major improvements have been made in the coverage of the United Nations Statistics Division's Commodity Trade Database (COMTRADE), resulting from a more structured approach in follow-up procedures and a more coordinated approach in the exchange of data collected for their own needs among international organizations.
	Some 76 country-periods of trade data have been incorporated into COMTRADE to cover the earlier years with no data, based on inputs received from the participating agencies of the Task Force.
	Increased use by the United Nations Statistics Division of IMF trade data for total imports and exports, unit values/price and volume indexes for publication purposes.
	Research into the use of Eurostat data in COMTRADE and of use by OECD of COMTRADE data.
	Agreement with the United Nations Statistics Division proposal to convert the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS) 92 and HS 96 data to HS 88.

Terms of reference	Achievements
	A report on the use of non-standard HS codes for confidential and security reasons.
	Agreement not to proceed with a formal revision of the Standard International Trade Classification, revision 3 (SITC, Rev.3) in order to keep SITC in line with HS but to circulate only concordance tables.
	Research report by UNCTAD on a system of trade deflators based on detailed bilateral commodity trade data.
	Contribution of experts from international organizations to two training workshops (i.e. Moscow and Addis Ababa).
	Exchange of information on EUROTRACE (Eurostat) and ASYCUDA (UNCTAD) and other technical cooperation projects to enhance coordination.
2. Assess problems, duplication, weaknesses, imbalances and priority gaps.	A study has been undertaken to compare the trade data published by different international organizations for the same countries in order to identify the reasons for discrepancies and to make recommendations.

Terms of reference	Achievements
	Research by the United Nations Statistics Division into sourcing Eurostat data will reduce response burden on national statistical offices, improve timeliness in the receipt of data, reduce the cost of processing by the Statistics Division, and provide comparable data for European Union (EU) members in the Commodity Trade Database (COMTRADE), as well as comparability with data for other countries in COMTRADE. Similarly, OECD has undertaken research into the use of COMTRADE for non-EU OECD countries. The United Nations Statistics Division has increased its use of IMF total trade data and unit value (see achievements under item 1 above). The Statistics Division has adopted IMF national currency trade values and indexes for nearly all countries, and is currently addressing the issue of divergency in dollar conversions.
3. Study how to carry out an evaluation of the quality of the statistics in the outputs, and carry out such an evaluation as far as possible.	A questionnaire on country reporting practices of merchandise trade has been developed and the results published. Proposals have been made to the World Customs Organization (WCO) for the separate identification in the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS) of goods for military use. Members of the Task Force have been actively involved in the revisions of HS at WCO, and in activities related to the implications and requirements of trade agreements. See also achievements under item 4 below.

Terms of reference	Achievements
4. Review the publications issued by each organization in the field of statistics, and make recommendations, taking account of the needs of the range of users.	An in-depth review of some 71 publications on trade statistics has been undertaken by the United Nations Statistics Division with the objective of identifying commonalities in output and timing, and the most notable discrepancies in reported data. A further concern was the relationship among the building blocks (aggregates) in the different publications. The findings were that the publication of aggregate totals in a range of publications were useful to users; different aggregations were designed to meet different needs; and although differences in numbers exist, there is a broad degree of consistency that is improving as reconciliation exercises are completed and common sourcing of data is increased.
5. Take agreed actions to improve the system-wide work in the area, including its coordination.	With the introduction of HS data, rationalization of the content of the COMTRADE database has taken place in terms of the different versions of the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) and HS. Ongoing work of WCO in the development of a commodity database and of standard units of quantity will improve the quality of the content of COMTRADE. A Windows-based personal computer user interface for COMTRADE was developed jointly by the United Nations Statistics Division and the International Computing Centre. Data is regularly exchanged between IMF and the United Nations Statistics Division for publication purposes. HS now includes details for petroleum products. Regarding price and volume indices, it has been agreed that 1990 will be selected as the base year for statistical series.

Terms of reference	Achievements
	The World Bank's TARS software for COMTRADE has been redesigned, in a comparative effort by the United Nations Statistics Division, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and the World Bank. A CD-ROM-based integrated database application has been developed jointly by the World Bank and WTO.
6. Report to the Working Group at its next session on actions taken and/or present proposals and unresolved issues for action by the Working Group.	The Task Force periodically reports to the Statistical Commission and its Working Group.
7. On the basis of the (descriptive) integrated work programme of statistics and related documentation, make an effort to identify weaknesses, gaps and imbalances on the current programme. In such a process, budgetary questions should be taken into account.	Budgetary constraints of some of the participating agencies have resulted in delays and cutbacks in the original work plan of the Task Force. In particular, work on estimation techniques had to be stopped and the future of work on trade deflators is uncertain.
8. In addition to continuing efforts to reduce the time lag between the observation period and the moment of dissemination of structural and detailed statistics, for some statistical subjects consider the possibility of collecting and disseminating more recent statistical information (main indicators).	Efforts have been made to improve timely publication and consistency in the estimates for total exports and imports that are now exchanged on a regular basis among agencies.

(d) Inter-agency task force on finance statistics

(Convener: IMF)

Terms of reference	Achievements
1. Determine work being done in the specified area by the organizations involved on methods, collection, compilation, processing and dissemination and technical cooperation, although it is recognized that technical cooperation may not lend itself to treatment on a subject-by-subject basis but may need to be reviewed in an integrated way.	The Task Force has conducted a survey of international organizations to determine work being done in finance statistics and the scope of ongoing technical assistance programmes.
2. On the basis of an integrated presentation of work programmes, assess problems, duplication, weaknesses, imbalances and priority gaps.	In addition to the survey of international organizations, the Task Force has corresponded with the authorities (national statistical offices, ministries of finance and central banks) in a number of industrial and developing countries to determine their concerns, both as producers and users of finance statistics. The Task Force has noted the considerable and probably increasing degree of data-sharing among international organizations, and has drawn attention to the development of statistical methodologies in finance statistics (balance of payments, government finance and monetary and financial statistics) to make them consistent with the 1993 SNA. The Task Force has concluded that the work programmes of international organizations in finance statistics are reasonably well coordinated and focused on user needs.

Terms of reference	Achievements
3. Study how to carry out an evaluation of the quality of the databases maintained by international organizations, and carry out such an evaluation as far as possible.	As a result of its survey of international organizations and its correspondence with users, the Task Force has concluded that international organizations, through their statistical publications in finance statistics, have played a useful role in supplementing national statistical publications. The Task Force has concluded that user needs are being met.
4. Review the publications issued by each organization, and make recommendations concerning the need for a guide to finance statistics, taking account of the needs of the range of users.	The Task Force does not see a need for a guide to finance statistics.
5. Identify actions needed to improve the system-wide work in the area, including its coordination.	The Task Force has concluded that the work of international organizations in finance statistics is generally well coordinated.
6. Report on actions taken, present proposals, and unresolved issues for action by the Working Group.	A written report was submitted to the Statistical Commission at its twenty-eighth session, together with a summary of discussions at the second meeting of the Task Force. A second written report of the Task Force is before the Commission.
7. In addition to continuing efforts to reduce the time lag in publication, consider the need and scope for disseminating more recent statistical information, possibly in the form of indicators.	The Task Force has concluded that finance statistics are published by international organizations on a timely basis. The Task Force does see a need for additional indicators in finance statistics to be included in the statistical publications of international organizations.

(e) Inter-agency Task Force on National Accounts

(Convener: ISWGNA)

Terms of reference	Achievements
1. Determine work being done in the specified area by the organizations involved on methods, collection, compilation, processing and dissemination and technical cooperation, although it is recognized that technical cooperation may not lend itself to treatment on a subject-by-subject basis but may need to be reviewed in an integrated way.	The ISWGNA support system consists of: (a) manuals, handbooks, compilation manuals and software in support of national accounting compilation; (b) meetings, training seminars and workshops, ad hoc and programmed courses in national accounts and related subjects, and training materials for use in those countries; (c) research activities designed to solve conceptual and practical problems in implementing the new system; (d) technical cooperation projects in individual countries.
2. Assess problems, duplication, weaknesses, imbalances and priority gaps.	ISWGNA monitors the activities of its member organizations, including the regional commissions, in providing a support system for helping countries to implement the System of National Accounts (SNA). ISWGNA regularly reviews the activities of its members to identify gaps, avoid duplication and develop common standards and recommendations.
3. Study how to carry out an evaluation of the quality of the statistics in the outputs, and carry out such an evaluation as far as possible.	ISWGNA, with the support of the regional commissions, has conducted a country survey on SNA implementation plans and needs for international support. ISWGNA has also defined milestones to characterize the degree of SNA implementation for each individual country.
4. Review the publications issued by each organization in the field of statistics, and make recommendations, taking account of the needs of the range of users.	ISWGNA regularly discusses all proposed methodological publications of any of its five member organizations.
5. Take agreed actions to improve the system-wide work in the area, including its coordination.	ISWGNA has agreed on a common questionnaire system, under which each country responds to only one international organization reporting national accounts data.

Terms of reference	Achievements
6. Report to the Working Group at its next session on actions taken and/or present proposals and unresolved issues for action by the Working Group.	The Task Force periodically reports to the Statistical Commission and its Working Group, giving an integrated presentation of its members' work programmes in support of SNA implementation.
7. On the basis of the (descriptive) integrated work programme of statistics and related documentation, make an effort to identify weaknesses, gaps and imbalances on the current programme. In such a process, budgetary questions should be taken into account.	See achievements under item 2 above.
8. In addition to continuing efforts to reduce the time lag between the observation period and the moment of dissemination of structural and detailed statistics, for some statistical subjects consider the possibility of collecting and disseminating more recent statistical information (main indicators).	ISWGNA has no mandate to review its member organizations' publication of data.

(f) Inter-agency Task Force on Price Statistics including the International Comparison Programme

(Convener: Eurostat)

Terms of reference	Achievements
1. Determine work being done in the specified area by the organizations involved on methods, collection, compilation, processing and dissemination and technical cooperation, although it is recognized that technical cooperation may not lend itself to treatment on a subject-by-subject basis but may need to be reviewed in an integrated way.	Connection between the ICP and national consumer price indexes (CPIs) is currently underplayed. The Task Force could act as a stimulant in opening up and establishing permanent links between the ICP and national CPIs.
2. Assess problems, duplication, weaknesses, imbalances and priority gaps.	

Terms of reference	Achievements
3. Study how to carry out an evaluation of the quality of the statistics in the outputs, and carry out such an evaluation as far as possible.	
4. Review the publications issued by each organization in the field of statistics, and make recommendations, taking account of the needs of the range of users.	
5. Take agreed actions to improve the system-wide work in the area, including its coordination.	
6. Report to the Working Group at its next session on actions taken and/or present proposals and unresolved issues for action by the Working Group.	The Task Force periodically reports to the Statistical Commission and its Working Group.
7. On the basis of the (descriptive) integrated work programme of statistics and related documentation, make an effort to identify weaknesses, gaps and imbalances on the current programme. In such a process, budgetary questions should be taken into account.	
8. Besides the continuation of efforts to reduce the time lag between the observation period and the moment of dissemination of structural and detailed statistics, for some statistical subjects consider the possibility of collecting and disseminating more recent statistical information (main indicators).	

(g) Inter-agency Task Force on Service Statistics

Convener: OECD

Terms of reference	Achievements
1. Determine work being done in the specified area by the organizations involved on methods, collection, compilation, processing and dissemination and technical cooperation, although it is recognized that technical cooperation may not lend itself to treatment on a subject-by-subject basis but may need to be reviewed in an integrated way.	Work has focused on the statistical requirements of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). Work on other kinds of service statistics, such as statistics of production and employment in service industries, will depend on the findings of the investigation currently being conducted by the United Nations Statistics Division.
2. Assess problems, duplication, weaknesses, imbalances and priority gaps.	
3. Study how to carry out an evaluation of the quality of the statistics in the outputs, and carry out such an evaluation as far as possible.	
4. Review the publications issued by each organization in the field of statistics, and make recommendations, taking account of the needs of the range of users.	
5. Take agreed actions to improve the system-wide work in the area, including its coordination.	
6. Report to the Working Group at its next session on actions taken and/or present proposals and unresolved issues for action by the Working Group.	The Task Force periodically reports to the Statistical Commission and its Working Group.
7. On the basis of the (descriptive) integrated work programme of statistics and related documentation, make an effort to identify weaknesses, gaps and imbalances on the current programme. In such a process, budgetary questions should be taken into account.	

Terms of reference	Achievements
8. In addition to continuing efforts to reduce the time lag between the observation period and the moment of dissemination of structural and detailed statistics, for some statistical subjects consider the possibility of collecting and disseminating more recent statistical information (main indicators).	

IV. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

11. The Commission may wish to:

(a) Consider the achievements of the various task forces since their establishment;

(b) Decide on the continuation of the work of each task force.

Notes

[1] See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1993, Supplement No. 6 (E/1993/26).

[2] See E/CN.3/1993/21, paras. 53, 65 and 68.